



MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

May 2006

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

FISH PASSAGE ON THE SEBASTICOOK RIVER OPERATIONAL

The Maine Department of Marine Resources (MEDMR) started pumping alewives at Fort Halifax dam on the Sebasticook River at about 11 am Monday, May 8. The first alewives arrived at Benton Falls - the next dam upstream – by 4pm that afternoon. About 5,000 fish were passed via the new fish lift into the Benton Falls headpond that day. On Wednesday morning, the first alewives had reached the third dam, Burnham, and were passed via the project's new lift, and then observed to pass into Sebasticook Lake early Thursday morning. By the end of the day Thursday, May 11, a total of 30,330 alewives had been passed into the Fort Halifax headpond. Anadromous species now have passage at all dams above the fort Halifax project and into Sebasticook Lake. Visit the MEDMR web page for the latest on the Kennebec River restoration. <http://www.maine.gov/dmr/rm/stockenhancement/kennebec/fishpass.htm> (sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)

HYDROPOWER LICENSING IMPLEMENTATION CONFERENCE

The Hydropower Reform Coalition (HRC) and American Rivers sponsored a “Hydropower Licensing Implementation Conference” on May 3-5 in Crawford Notch, NH. The first day of the conference included discussion of experiences from implementing recent hydropower settlement agreements, the hydropower licensing process and long-term river restoration, and how to involve watershed groups in license implementation. The next day, “Adaptive Management” received extensive discussion: how to adjust the management approach to new circumstances and empirical information; what it is, what it is not, and how to use this approach. Few state or federal resource agency representatives were present, giving the meeting a different perspective on the hydropower licensing process and associated activities. This was a good opportunity to meet individuals associated with NGOs involved in hydropower licensing actions from around the country, including several individuals who have been involved for many years. The general discussion provided perspective, and in some instances reinforced some activities the Northeast Region is undertaking. More information about the conference can be found at the HRC website: (<http://www.hydroreform.org/implementation-conf.asp>). (sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)

JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732

VIRGINIA SEAFOOD COUNCIL

HCD submitted comments to the Norfolk District, U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers (ACOE), on an application by the Virginia Seafood Council to introduce 2.5 million non-native, triploid, (sterile) Suminoe Oysters (*Crassostrea ariakensis*) into the waters of Chesapeake Bay and the Ocean to be raised by up to 15 participants using a variety of aquaculture grow-out methods. The purpose of this project is to test the feasibility for another one year market product for triploid *C. ariakensis*. The proposed time span of the project is from June 1, 2006 until June 1, 2007; to use and assess a new nursery method for oyster seed, specifically known as a paddlewheel Floating Upweller System (FLUPSY); and to allow oysters introduced into aquaculture sites in the 2005 project that did not reach market size to remain at project sites. (Stanley.W.Gorski@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3037; Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)

VIRGINIA WETLANDS MITIGATION BANKS

HCD staff reviewed two proposed wetland mitigation banks in Virginia. (Mitigation banking has been defined as wetland restoration, creation, enhancement, and in exceptional circumstances, preservation undertaken expressly for the purpose of compensating for unavoidable wetland losses in advance of development actions, when such compensation cannot be achieved at the development site or would not be as environmentally beneficial.) One bank, proposed by Vulcan Construction Materials, LP, would construct a wetland compensatory mitigation bank, to be known as the Puddledock Environmental Bank, on 55 acres of land in Prince George County, Virginia. The property is adjacent to the Appomattox River, a tidal tributary to the James River. Another bank, proposed by York River Wetlands Mitigation Landbank, LLC, would expand the currently approved 505 acres York River Wetlands Mitigation Bank to include an additional 454 acres of land contiguous to the existing bank. HCD reviewed and provided comments on the prospectus for each bank, and requested to be kept informed of the banks' progress. (Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)

GREENWICH TOWNSHIP

Habitat staff met with other state and federal agencies to discuss potential work of the ACOE and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Fish and Wildlife Service in Greenwich Township. There are three projects, the Bacons Neck Road/Pine Mount Creek Road repair and tide gate regulation, Gum Tree Corner Road/Pine Mount Creek culvert and restoration and the Pine Mount Creek/Cohansey River dike restoration, which are related. Discussion centered around the coordination of these projects to ensure that the goals of each are compatible, and that the water flow is sufficient for their success. Flooding issues have been a serious concern for over ten years, with impacts on residents and on habitats, and a comprehensive approach is necessary. (anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)

MILFORD FIELD OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460

GOETHALS BRIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL TASK FORCE TO CONVENE

The United States Coast Guard has agreed to host a meeting of the Environmental Task Force for the Goethals Bridge Replacement proposal. This is the second time in approximately a decade that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has considered replacement of the Goethals Bridge, which links northern New Jersey and Staten Island just north of the Gulfport reach of the Arthur Kill River. As part of the National Environmental Policy Act process, the project proponents have developed a transportation model that compares and screens project alternatives in anticipation of preparing a draft environmental impact statement for public review some time in early 2007. Habitat Conservation Division staff from the Milford, Connecticut and Sandy Hook, New Jersey field offices will be coordinating closely on project impacts that would accrue in New York and New Jersey from the resulting design alternatives. Staff provided the project proponents with preliminary technical information and reminded them that a portion of tidal wetlands in or adjacent to the study area were part of a highly successful restoration project funded by the Exxon Bayway/BT Nautilus restoration effort, and are of particular concern to this agency. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504 or Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3000)

FUEL DOCK ALTERATIONS & HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROPOSED

Stuyvesant Fuel Terminal Company has revised the scope of its proposed dock expansion project and now proposes to accommodate larger vessels by installing a 200-foot long breast beam at its existing fuel terminal in the East River. To mitigate for overall aquatic resource impacts, the applicant has submitted a proposed mitigation design that entails demolition of decking at existing Dock #3 at their Bronx, New York facilities, and subsequent installation of low-rise habitat enhancement elements in the former dock footprint. The revised project was requested to address recent trends in the barge transportation industry, which increasingly prefer larger and higher capacity vessels over traditional size classes. This trend requires the fuel terminal operator to take proactive measures to prevent dock failure resulting from their aging structures being struck by larger barges (up to 400 feet in length). (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

HIGHWAY CORRIDOR ANALYSIS PROPOSED IN SOUTHERN NEW YORK

Southern Tier Economic Growth has retained a consultant to perform a highway corridor analysis that explores the feasibility of constructing a highway spur that would connect New York State Route 13 with the Center at Horseheads, a site in Chemung County, New York. The stated project study area lies in the southern tier of New York north of the Pennsylvania border and includes a variety of water courses that support predominantly cold water fisheries. Staff from the Milford Field Office will respond to a technical information request regarding this proposal in early June. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

WATERFRONT CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES PROPOSED AT MANHATTAN'S WEST SIDE

Hudson Waterfront Associates, L.P. has made application to the New York District, ACOE to redevelop a portion of the Hudson River waterfront along Riverside Park South. All activities under the Department of the Army's jurisdiction would take place in or immediately adjacent to

the Hudson River on Manhattan's West Side approximately nine kilometers north of Battery Park. In particular, the proposal entails installation of pre-cast concrete retaining walls, concrete block terracing, rip rap slopes, and installation of twenty seasonal, offshore moorings intended for non-motorized recreational vessels. Habitat Conservation Division staff will review the proposal in the coming weeks and provide comments as necessary to the ACOE in early June. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

CHESAPEAKE BAY FIELD OFFICE, 410 SEVERN AVE, SUITE 107A, ANNAPOLIS, MD 21403

AES SPARROWS POINT LNG TERMINAL

Regulatory review continues for the proposed AES Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Terminal at Sparrows Point, Dundalk, Maryland. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has accepted the six-month pre-filing process for the AES proposal, and has released a notification of the intent to prepare an EIS, accept environmental comments, and hold public hearings. Formal application filing by AES is planned for November 2006. Preliminary design concepts for the terminal include a single pier with berthing space for LNG vessels on both sides of the pier, unloading facilities, and pipeline transfer facilities from the pier to three land-based LNG storage tanks capable of containing 160,000 cubic meters of liquid gas. The applicant is currently considering alternatives for reducing the dredge area for a proposed LNG vessel entrance channel and turning basin. Dredge material generated from the proposed channel and basin, initially estimated at 2.5 – 4 million cubic yards, will be handled on-site, and processed for innovative uses, such as strip-mine and quarry reclamation. The LNG terminal will be connected to an existing interstate pipeline system via construction of 87 miles of new pipeline that will extend from Sparrows Point to the interconnection points of the Columbia Gas Transmission, TRANSCO, and Texas Eastern pipelines in Eagle Pennsylvania. The preferred corridor for the new pipeline will pass through Baltimore and West Harford Counties, Maryland; and through York, Lancaster, and Chester Counties, Pennsylvania. AES provides monthly presentations regarding this proposal at Joint Evaluation Meetings held in Annapolis, Maryland. (John.Nichols@NOAA.GOV, 410/ 267-5675)